

Domestic Abuse Policy

(Operational)

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Alternative Formats

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1. Rationale

PBNI recognises the serious impact domestic abuse has on victims, children, families and wider society. The Domestic Abuse Policy and supporting procedures seek to provide staff with clear guidance in dealing with service users who are perpetrators of domestic abuse, and also victims or potential victims of domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse, also referred to as domestic violence or intimate partner violence, is defined as *“threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.”* (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Justice, 2013)

Domestic Abuse behaviour can undermine self-confidence, creating isolation of the victim from friends and family and controlling access to money, food, transportation and telephone. It can involve destruction of property, stalking and violent crime across a range of offences, including murder. It can significantly affect children who witness abusive behaviours and contribute to trauma and long-term psychological damage. The level of violence may escalate over time and go unreported or denied. Within heterosexual relationships, while the majority of victims are women, men can also be victims. Domestic Abuse also occurs within same sex relationships.

2. Aim

That PBNI works, in partnership with other agencies, to protect the public from offences of domestic abuse and thereby making communities safer.

3. Objectives

- To make best use of up-to-date research and information in the assessment and management of risk presented by the perpetrators of domestic abuse with whom PBNI works.
- To monitor the need for, and to plan and implement appropriate new interventions to develop PBNI’s suite of programmes to address this offending behaviour.
- To contribute to effective partnership working through participation in local and regional Domestic Abuse Partnerships; Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), Domestic Violence and Abuse Disclosure Schemes (DVADS) and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). In addition, PBNI will work with the Public Protection

Arrangements for Northern Ireland (PPANI) in respect of perpetrators of domestic abuse managed under the arrangements and PSNI Domestic Abuse Officers and Crime Prevention Officers specifically in relation to vulnerable victims.

- To support the DoJ Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy (2023) by implementing those objectives identified as relevant to PBNI.
- To ensure PBNI staff are provided with appropriate information in relation to policy and supporting procedures and partnership working arrangements.

Expected outcomes from implementation of this policy are:

- Victims / survivors of Domestic Abuse will be protected by reducing service users' opportunity and propensity to offend.
- Registered Victims will be provided with relevant information and support from the Victim Information Unit.
- The assessment and management of risk posed by service users under PBNI supervision will contribute to public protection.
- Effective PBNI service delivery through reports to Courts and Parole Commissioners; case management; programmes, oversight of partner link work and strong partnership working.

4. Procedures

PBNI will implement interventions appropriate to addressing domestic abuse based on risk, need and responsivity as part of court mandated sentences. These will include nationally accredited programmes for service users assessed as high risk and one-to-one interventions for service users assessed as low/moderate risk.

PBNI will continue to deliver an intervention programme for non adjudicated perpetrators in conjunction with our partners in the Health and Social Services Trusts.

5. Structures/mechanisms

This policy links with the following policies, procedures and arrangements:

- Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland: A Seven Year Strategy March 2023 (DoJ)
- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls 2023 (Executive Office)

- Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures: Adults at Risk of Harm and Adults in Need of Protection. (HSCB 2016)
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) Operating Protocol
- PBNI - Significant Risk of Serious Harm to Others Procedures - June 2021
- PBNI – Child Protection/ Safeguarding Policy and Procedures – September 2021
- PBNI – Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures – September 2021
- Public Protection Arrangements Northern Ireland: Guidance to Agencies and Manual of Practice (2023)
- PBNI - Domestic Violence and Abuse (Workplace) Policy - 2019
- PBNI - Corporate Plan 2023-26.

With regard to recent and current developments:

- PBNI considers that the introduction of new legislation, namely the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021, the Protection from Stalking Act (NI) 2022 and the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (NI) 2022 has strengthened the protection of victims of domestic abuse and stalking type behaviours. Particularly as a result of the creation of a specific domestic abuse offence, and offences of non-fatal strangulation and stalking.
- PBNI welcomes the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) in October 2023 and supports the introduction of Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) in 2024.
- PBNI contributed to the Review of MARAC (2023) and will work with partner agencies to implement the agreed recommendations.
- PBNI considers the absence of Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) is a gap in the provision of support to victims of domestic abuse.
- PBNI welcomes the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in Northern Ireland and is committed to learning from the findings and implementing recommendations as relevant.

6. Responsibilities

- In the operation of the policy and supporting procedures PBNI staff shall address the risks posed by perpetrators of Domestic Abuse in a way which is lawful, necessary and proportionate, taking into consideration the concerns of victims.
- Staff shall respond to the individual needs of perpetrators and victims regardless of race, gender, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability.
- PBNI is committed to an inter-agency approach in working with perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse.
- All staff shall take any incident /alleged incident of Domestic Abuse or abuse in respect of a service user in contact with PBNI seriously, and shall record and address both the incident/alleged incident and subsequent actions, including referral to other appropriate agencies.
- Staff shall follow PBNI's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in respect of children exposed to domestic abuse.
- Staff shall follow PBNI's Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in respect of adult victims of domestic abuse.
- Staff shall refer victims of domestic abuse into MARAC when appropriate, and will ensure repeat cases are re-referred into MARAC (a repeat case is where there has been ANY instance of abuse between the same victim and perpetrator within 12 months of the last MARAC).
- Victims shall be treated with care, sensitivity and respect.
- Staff shall recognise that some service users may be victims of abuse and that their offending may therefore be linked to their experience of abuse.
- Managers shall monitor the implementation and operation of the reviewed Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedures.

7. Resources

Implementation of this policy will be within existing sources. Training in this policy will include:

- All new operational staff and students receiving training as part of their induction to PBNI.
- On-going training and support available as required through

identification of need in staff supervision arrangements.

8. Communication

This Policy is supported by a separate Procedures document. Both documents are available on PBNI's website and Intranet.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The policy will be kept under review to ensure it is in keeping with current legislation and effective practice guidance. The operation of the policy shall be monitored through staff supervision; file monitoring; internal audit, and may be subject to external inspection. Evaluation of the operation of the policy and supporting procedures may be carried out by the Audit Team, on behalf of an Assistant Director/Head of Psychology & Interventions.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed four years from the date of approval. Interim reviews may be prompted by learning from SCRs and DHRs, identified changes in legislation or wider policy initiatives.

11. Implications of non-compliance

PBNI will seek to implement this policy in line with agreed procedures. Where this is not carried through PBNI will seek to understand the reasons why and to address to ensure appropriate compliance. Breach of the Board's Policy and Procedures by employees may merit consideration under the Board's Disciplinary Policy.